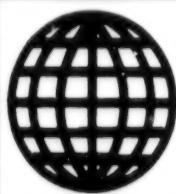


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JPRS Report

Near East & South Asia

PALESTINIAN AFFAIRS

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Christian, Muslim Leaders on National Unity

92AE0245A Jerusalem AL-USBU' AL-JADID in Arabic
1 Feb 92 pp 8-14

[Article by Ahmad al-Bukhari: "AL-USBU' Explores Opinions of National Figures, Muslim and Christian Clergymen on National Unity, Renouncing Feuds"]

[Text] On the dimensions and indicators of national unity; on how to understand, protect, and entrench it; and on how to root out the problems that develop from time to time; AL-USBU' AL-JADID has interviewed a number of national figures and Muslim and Christian clergymen, so they could express their opinion on preserving and bolstering national unity under these circumstances and in the face of the furious storms facing us. It has asked them the following questions:

1. How do you understand the dimensions and indicators of national unity in the current phase?
2. Local problems crop up from time to time. How should we deal with these problems to protect and entrench our national unity in these difficult circumstances?

His Eminence Shaykh 'Akramah Sabri, Preacher of Blessed al-Aqsa Mosque and Preaching and Guidance Director

It is no secret to anybody that our Palestinian issue is a complex and thorny issue. Therefore, it isn't easy for all to agree on the details. This is expected and it is not bad.

If our people agree on one objective, it is the objective of removing the occupation. It is everybody's duty to focus on this objective, paying no attention to side issues. We live in a delicate and serious phase, and efforts must be unified to confront it.

In case of any disagreement in opinions, we must resort to purposeful and constructive dialogue without employing violence, slander, and defamation because they have many negative effects that are no secret to anybody. All must be careful of planted, suspicious elements that try to fish in troubled waters. Therefore, I propose that a "coordination committee" be formed from all the tendencies and be entrusted with the following tasks:

- If any problem develops, settle disputes promptly.
- Expose elements that fabricate incidents.
- Bring those who make mistakes to account in order to control matters and not allow them to get out of hand.

Bishop Dr. Lutfi Lahham, Roman Catholic Vice-Patriarch for Jerusalem

At the outset of the intifadah, our national unity was splendid. This unity grew stronger with the development of the intifadah and we were proud of it. But now, numerous cracks are posing a threat to this unity.

You have discovered some things and you have missed others. The problems are more numerous than you imagine, and they come from kinsmen, not from strangers. Therefore, we have to engage in extensive dialogue amongst ourselves. We must be tolerant and open-minded, and we must grow as human beings in order to overcome the difficulties facing us.

We have to be frank, loving, and firm. We must couple all this with flexibility. We must put an end to violations, set matters aright, and find out the true causes of the problems. We will thus avoid the evils and schemes of those who want to harm our unity, who rejoice at our hardship, and who do not want us to accomplish our objectives and achieve our legitimate rights.

I have agreed to answer the questions of my brothers the journalists in my capacity as the bishop, pastor, and servant of this people. Therefore, I hope that my observations will be received by all with love, because they emanate from a heart that loves all and from the belief that we are all the sons of these sacred lands and that we must preserve their spiritual values and create in them a better future for all our children and for our rising generations. With my best wishes and love for all, and my thanks to AL-USBU' AL-JADID.

Dr. Mahmud al-Zahhar, Gaza

In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate. The truth is that the national unity concept is actually misunderstood. This is the reason for the problems that crop up and recur. The main reason for this misunderstanding is that one side goes over the limits that must be observed carefully. This exceeding of the limits results in compelling one party or faction to accept the other side's convictions. This is something new in the Palestinian arena, and it means terminating the convictions of large sectors of the Palestinian people. For example, there are among the Palestinian people those who see that the peace process is the solution and who try to give the impression that those who [don't] believe in this idea are a minority—people who don't want peace, dissidents, or people who fit into many such characterizations cited by the local press.

Second, there are violations that cannot be condoned at all, such as transgressions against mosques or murdering people, as happened in Gaza on the 30th of last October, and as happened in Nablus and Tulkarm recently.

The third element is use of the logic of legitimacy to abolish or withdraw confidence from any opposing individual or faction. This is some sort of intellectual suppression.

The fourth element is the use of means prohibited by tradition and religion to disseminate an idea or to persuade others. The examples are numerous.

This is a summary of the most important causes that torpedo national unity and fail to preserve it. Another

element is embodied in unjustifiable and untrue accusations that do not serve the Palestinian people's cause.

The truth is that the problems that crop up are due to numerous causes, a number of which have been mentioned in the answer to the first question. How should these issues be dealt with? Constant dialogue must be begun to deal with every detail, large or small. This dialogue should be public and carried on the pages of the press. The local press should open its pages to all opinions. This is something that doesn't exist yet. Some papers confine their words to supporting a certain opinion against another opinion.

The second thing is to have constant, open, and public meetings between all the intellectual factions and tendencies, and to have these meetings' minutes recorded and distributed to the public so that this public can then follow the course which it sees as the convincing course.

Moreover, no major measures or steps that could have effects of a public nature should be taken independently, such as the decision to carry olive branches, which offended the Palestinian people in their entirety. Even though the majority of the people support peace, they rejected this manifestation. Thus, portraying rejection of the negative manifestation as rejection of the essence is tantamount to misleading the public.

We should not escalate disagreement to the degree of conflict, because conflict is destructive to all factions and it spares nobody. Therefore, I strongly condemn the murder of the young man in Tulkarm and I believe that this course is destructive to the entire society. This is what the venerable Koran refers to, saying: "If any one slew a person, unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land, it would be as if he slew the whole people." [Koran 5:35].

Ibrahim Nimr Husayn, Chairman of Local [Arab] Councils in the Interior [Israel], in Shefar'amr

First of all, we, as Palestinian people, are supposed to preserve national unity despite all the circumstances facing us, because without unity we have no strength, deterrence, or a unified international position. I don't see that plurality of opinion contradicts unity. But plurality should be in the service of unity, first and foremost. If plurality of opinion surpasses the framework of unity, then such plurality is unnecessary. In true democracies, healthy peoples know that regardless of how numerous the opinions, they all flow into the framework of comprehensive national unity, as is the case on the other side, i.e., among the Israeli people.

The truth is that I am offended by the slanders which I hear from the Palestinian side. We are not supposed to engage in such slander. If we do, it will mean our total collapse.

I see no objection to the presence of problems within one side, because problems exist everywhere, especially under the circumstances we are experiencing in this

country, where there is military rule, an uprising, and a peace conference. To understand these circumstances and to confront them on their turf, we must all realize that we have one objective and we must try to keep matters under control.

Prior to 1948, i.e., prior to the creation of the State of Israel, there were organizations such as Irgun, Hagana, and Stern Gang. There were disagreements and disputes among them. But fundamentally, they were united by a single objective, namely to establish an Israeli state on Palestine's soil or on part of Palestine. They all vied for this objective. Therefore, we must learn the lesson from them. Currently, there are numerous parties in Israel, there is plurality, and there is a vast disagreement in opinion. But when the issue is fateful, they all unite. Objections and uprisings are conducted among them democratically and with dialogue.

In conclusion, I wish to appeal to the Palestinian leaders in the occupied territories to preserve unity and to renounce the disputes that developed recently, such as the Tulkarm dispute that led to the death of a young man. I hope such a dispute will not recur, God willing.

'Abd-al-Latif Ghayth, Jerusalem

To begin, I wish to thank the colleagues in AL-USBU' AL-JADID for asking me to answer two questions on the dimensions and indicators of national unity in the current phase and on how to confront the problems that occur from time to time, in order to protect our national unity.

In the current phase, I urge adherence to the Palestinian invariables. The most significant of these are the rights to repatriation, self-determination, creation of the independent Palestinian state, correct representation, and viewing the Palestine Liberation Organization [PLO] as the Palestinian people's sole legitimate representative. Therefore, I consider any political solutions or initiatives or any participation in any conferences that are not based on these unchangeables to be tantamount to exposing national unity to serious dangers.

The problems that crop up here and there should not be understood as problems that fall within the framework of healthy disagreement. I mean by "the problems" here the violent and confrontational problems. They waste time, shatter the unified opposition, and strike national unity. These problems are met with popular condemnation and disapproval. This is why efforts must be made to put an end to such phenomena. The ways to accomplish this are:

First, the democratic procedure must be generalized in society so that the human mentality and behavior will become democratic. This is a broad political and social educational task that requires large-scale efforts, programs, and care. It is my opinion that this is a fundamental solution.

Second, ethical concepts and values must be generalized and the youth must be raised with these values, which will prohibit internecine fighting for any reason through the issuance of a cultural code of honor that controls the relations of individuals or factions with each other. In the absence of an actual authority capable of solving crises immediately, then values, ethics, and charters have their importance.

Third, disseminate dialogue, establish debate, and encourage reconciliation committees and well-meaning people to settle local disagreements and disputes, especially among the youth, and task seriously whoever swerves from our people's ethics and values.

Qaddurah Musa, Member of Journalists League's Executive Council, Janin

The indicators in this phase are serious. What we hear and what we see on the real Palestinian ground at home is an extension of the visual and written media. Our people's ability to control and adhere to the outlines of national unity is late in coming. However, we, the Palestinians from all factions and of all affiliations, must not overstep the outlines and must adhere to them practically and realistically, because Palestinians at home and abroad will be the only loser whenever there is any division. As a civilized people who have their own culture and history, we must deal very culturally and scientifically with all problems. We must not forget that fabricating problems will only divide and fragment us further and will not enable us to attain our rights. This political phase is a battle for us to prove to our enemy and to the world that we really do understand democracy and that we employ the highest forms of democracy in our dealings.

All the problems that occur on the ground are the result of past problems, possibly historical, or the result of fanaticism by this or that faction. In every part of the country there are people capable of settling, containing, or ending disputes. These problems can be contained by having every citizen shoulder a part of this burden that is so heavy to society. We should also act in accordance with the commandment of our apostle, Muhammad, may God's peace and prayers be upon him, that "each of you is a shepherd and each is responsible for his herd." Let us engage in dialogue democratically, let us disagree, and let us understand how we disagree. If we understand these two conditions, then I see that a problem is nothing but a negative manifestation. I don't doubt that a secret party nurtures these problems in order to divide us and to waste our efforts and accomplishments.

**Professor Bashir al-Barghuthi, AL-TAL'AH
Newspaper Editor in Chief**

National unity is not a luxury that one indulges in from time to time. It is, especially under our current circumstances, a national necessity and a instrument of struggle, without which it would be difficult for us to march forward on the path of achieving our national objectives.

When we speak of national unity, we mean unity of the national interests of the people's various factions, not just the relationship between a number of national factions. In this regard, there is a gap. The national factions cannot represent and guard national unity without representing the common factors shared by the people's national and social factions. Regrettably, this representation suffers from an obvious imbalance that is embodied in the pressure exerted by factional and bureaucratic considerations over awareness of the importance of sticking to the common factors. This is what sometimes leads to regrettable situations. This pressure can be eliminated only by democratic action, by respect for opinion and counter-opinion, by everybody's acknowledgment that nobody has sole possession of the truth, and by throwing the door wide open for responsible dialogue.

Perhaps the answer [to the second question] is in the first answer. I believe that exploiting the power of moral pressure by the social forces' representatives; and even using the power of tribal pressure, without reluctance, to create protective frameworks, to develop general social awareness of the importance of clinging to democracy and to our people's traditions of respect for opinion and counter-opinion, and to strengthen political awareness of the serious nature of the phase we are going through and of the fact that we are all, despite our disagreements, in the same boat and that we are required to preserve it—I believe that all this could deter the emergence of regrettable problems that occur from time to time.

Shaykh Isma'il Muhammad al-Jamal, Jericho

God has honored our nation with the blessing of faith. One of the greatest mainstays of this blessing is unification and a life cleansed of all the traces of ignorance and corruption. One of its fruits is unity of the ranks; agreement on goals and objectives; binding hearts with the bonds of love and fraternity; and channeling efforts toward cooperation for whatever serves the nation's welfare, happiness, security, and safety. Even if they [the faithful] disagree in opinion, they do not disagree in their hearts, deeds, and tendencies. Their slogan is God's words, may God be praised and exalted:

"Help ye one another in righteousness and piety, but help ye not one another in sin and rancour and in disobedience to the apostle." [Koran 5:3] Their constant hymn is "and say: 'Work...[Koran 9:105]" They are guided by the words of the apostle, may God's peace and prayers be upon him, that say: "Any nation that strays after guidance will only reap argument and lack of action."

Awareness of the serious responsibility and the heavy trust thrown on the shoulder of every believer and sincere man makes him look beyond himself, his whims, his arrogance, and his selfishness, and makes him realize that the noblest and most sublime goal is the greatest duty. It is thus that hearts are purged of rancors, problems disappear, and disagreements vanish. It is then that

disagreement in opinion becomes a sign of health and vigor, not vice versa. God is the sole governor of success.

Dr. Muhammad Jadallah, Bayt Safafa

Palestinian national unity in the current phase will be understood and discussed correctly if we proceed from the following three facts:

First, our Palestinian people have tested national unity in many phases of their struggle, especially the current phase, and tasted the accomplishments of this unity.

Second, the decline of contradictions among the Palestinian society's factions and segments has led to the main contradiction between them and the Israeli occupation. This is a result of the unique character of the Palestinian issue and, at the same time, the unique character of the occupation.

Third, the law of unity and conflict has been tested at more than one major turning point in the history of our struggle. Real accomplishments have also been tasted in this regard.

In this phase, Palestinian national unity in the entire region will be the direct expression and natural reflection of the extent of the elements of democracy in society. Unity is the barometer of the presence of democracy, not only in the relations between the various Palestinian forces and factions, but also between all segments of the people and their leadership. National unity will continue to be the Palestinian people's fate, regardless of how far apart their ideas and of how intense the conflict, because the freedom and independence issue continues to be the main concern, on which all the people's factions and forces are unanimous.

Disagreement in opinion doesn't ruin the struggle for our people's cause or ruin our people's determination to defy the continuing Israeli occupation, to defeat it, and to end it. This disagreement doesn't diminish their determination to build the new Palestinian society or the new democratic human community. It is not right to assume that unity means identical opinions and similar positions and that the lack of such sameness and similarity means the absence of national unity. Recently, two contradictory tendencies on the peace process have surfaced among our people's ranks, whether at home or in the diaspora. The two courses are different from one another. But the details and results of the two courses speak of the presence of a firm base of national unity, despite some negative forms of expression. Neither tendency has taken final positions, and each tendency is engaged in dialogue with the others and within itself. Neither side has declared that the other has abandoned the field of struggle. The more the democratic concept of the struggle process develops, the better become the elements and mainstays of national unity.

The PLO must continue to form the framework that encompasses all the forces and activities at home and in the diaspora. The real conditions indicate the presence

of a firm base of national unity, even though it is sometimes difficult to feel this firmness in the Palestinian position, especially if we keep up with incidents that occur daily here and there. It is true that some of these incidents have reached tragic proportions, but we must beware of exaggeration in portraying them because such exaggeration flows into the sphere of the enemies' determination to distort our people's struggle and to depict it as merely Palestinians killing other Palestinians. This is not the case. What unites us is a whole lot more than what divides us.

In the course of its defiance of the occupation and of its efforts to establish the mainstays and structure of the new Palestinian society, the intifadah has been able to gain very rich experience in leading the Palestinian people.

While performing a leadership role through its instruments, arms, and committees, the intifadah unites and channels its efforts toward a single objective, namely independence and establishing a state. This requires the Palestinian people's leadership to shoulder its duties at all levels, and to change conditions toward understanding and comprehending the activity and struggle of the people's masses by listening to the masses, respecting them, renouncing the determination to usurp their role, and ending the attempts to export its methods of action abroad to the occupied territories. To confront the major issues, it isn't enough to offer ideas, to address appeals, and to assign tasks. In addition to all this, the masses have to be persuaded of the new changes. The deeper the changes, the greater the need to arouse interest in them, to develop awareness of them, and to persuade the masses of their necessity.

Before anything else, democracy lies in having the masses participate not only in charting the political method, but also in implementing it. The masses have their own skills, and to them belongs the final say on all their issues, on the formation of their leadership bodies, and on electing their leaders.

Jawwad Bahr al-Natshah, Islamic Culture Teacher at Hebron Religious Secondary School and Lecturer at the Women's al-Rahmah [Mercy] College

Regarding the dimensions and indicators of national unity in the current phase, it seems to me that the national unity slogan now being raised is a slogan with no credibility, or a slogan whose credibility has not risen to the desired level.

It doesn't seem to me that the signs or harbingers indicate that this slogan will be realized in the future. The slogan is bigger than its credibility.

This doesn't preclude the presence of other forms of coordination or cooperation among the national tendencies. Such forms exist, but they don't rise to the level of the raised slogan.

I say this, motivated by a feeling of sadness for a bitter reality for which sweet and pretty slogans are raised.

I need not mention proofs of my words. There is enough evidence in the very contradictory positions. When the positions are declared, those who hold certain positions make some sort of accusation against those who hold other positions. I don't wish to be like one of those who pat this slogan on the back. But when asked about its content, such people can offer nothing other than an antithesis that is at great variance with the slogan.

I hope that national unity will build itself within the framework of Islam, which has the proper formula for the handsome slogan of "national unity."

As for the unexpected local problems and how to deal with them in order to protect and entrench our national unity in these difficult circumstances, the most important thing is to have a sincere tendency to unite the ranks and to overcome differences. But this alone is not enough, because steering away from the people's spiritual and religious tendency will not create unity.

If it is impossible to unite within the framework of the people's intellectual tendency, then the least that can be done is to forget or bypass the numerous problems diverting the Palestinian people from their most important tasks. Problems should not arise to begin with, because reason should be everybody's guide. But if problems occur, then reason dictates that rational people be allowed to control matters and to prevent the rash from getting involved in the problems that happen.

The slogan of national unity requires credibility, and a sincere tendency is required to establish such credibility.

George Hazbun, Federation of Unions Deputy Secretary General

The truth is that I no longer understand national unity through agreement or disagreement among the national parties or factions. This form of understanding no longer reflects the real Palestinian situation. Very often, this form has led to profound negativism among the masses. This is what is felt in this delicate and articular phase of our people's history.

If we want to be accurate, we must, in fact, note that our people, with their awareness and their practical experience, understand the political characteristics of the phase. But the people are extremely aware that they are dealt with through a disgraceful process of elimination. The people are not asked to participate and they are not offered political clarifications, especially in connection with the negotiation process. Arrangements are made to create frameworks and bodies that include the same [old] names. It is as if our people have become barren, and as if only these names are available, keeping in mind that some of the names have their connections and are ineligible. [But] we still speak of national unity and make speeches in its name!

Unity comes through democracy, i.e., through involving the broadest masses in the political process. An end must be put to tribal and factional laxity. We are required to courageously criticize what is going on today, and to move to reject it on the basis that the common factors of our national unity are found in the singularity of the PLO's representation, in the resolutions of the Palestine National Council's national meeting, and in the inevitability of our adherence to our homeland, with respect for international legitimacy.

In the presence of such common factors, the flaw lies in the action. It is necessary to demand that custodianship be lifted from the people who have gained experience in struggle, whose awareness has deepened, and whose sacrifices have mounted. Today, action for true national unity requires a pause to consider absence of the masses, especially from the people's national institutions. One finds, for example, that names are given to new institutions but one doesn't know why an institution is given this name and not that one. What about the existing institutions? And we still speak of democracy and the masses! We must realize that there is a crisis in the existing bureaucracy and that the parties to the national movement are not the masses' heirs, allowing them to split the masses' share amongst themselves! When this realization dawns, then a fundamental, democratic national unity will be achieved.

What I have said in my answer to the first question also applies to the second question. The problems that crop up are nothing but manifestations of the crisis. The way these manifestations or phenomena are dealt with will not eliminate the crisis, but will worsen it, because problems are tackled with tribal compromise, though couched in political language. The factional upbringing has created a cliquish spirit (political sectarianism) that puts loyalty to the organization ahead of loyalty to the people, the country, and the cause. This is frightful and dangerous, now and in the future. The only solution is to expand the circle that deals with the problems, to seek public arbitration from the popular bodies, and to stop "stroking egos" and installing demigods. Democracy is the only cure. The crisis is not in the unity of the national masses, because they are united in action and in national objective. So why do disputes, not problems, occur? They develop between the organizations, not among the masses. However, the masses pay the price and are used as fuel. The crisis is in the fact that criticism has become prohibited and that democratic organizational thinking is obstructed. Since the occupation, no organizations have introduced any fundamental changes into their action or performance. It is enough to look around and notice that the leaders have remained in their place, regardless of the oratorical speeches and articles, and have not engaged in a critical review of the struggle experience. Regrettably, everybody's concern is to demonstrate his influence and his place among the forces and followings. Yet, people still ask: Why the problems and how do we deal with them?

Let us turn to the masses for arbitration and let popular arbitration bodies be formed in all towns and villages, not on the basis of organizational quotas, but on subjective quotas. There are no election possibilities at present. So let our press, in its capacity as the people's podiums, act democratically and provide the opportunity for criticism and for the opinion of these bodies to be heard so that all can understand that they are not above accountability.

Nizar Ramadan, Journalist and Member of International Islamic Information Institute, Hebron

The national unity dimensions and indicators in the current phase sway as if they are floating on water. This is because the bases on which this unity was founded have been uprooted. I believe that we can read the indications of this vision in the dozens of regrettable, bloody incidents that occur here and there in front of all people. All this happens to the accompaniment of the tunes and semblance of national unity.

Where is this unity when brother sheds brother's blood and when the efforts are diverted from their true objective to the nation's wounded body? There is no doubt that a people living under occupation are in the direst need to be a single united body, with each part supporting the other. This can be accomplished only within the framework of Islam, which prohibits transgression and respects other people's rights and viewpoints. This is the only path through which we can preserve our unity and unite our ranks.

As to the incidents that sometimes happen, we can deal with them as follows:

1. Focus efforts on the original, immortal objective—to live freely and independently and to rid ourselves of subservience to others.
2. Have every sincere citizen and all our people's institutions and organizations denounce any act that fragments the national unity we advocate. Here, I will particularly mention the regrettable incidents that occurred recently in Tulkarm. Anybody preaching sincere patriotism must reject, denounce, and condemn such acts, which only serve our enemy.
3. Every faction must also respect the other faction's right, especially since we live under the same difficult circumstances. Through our numerous wings, we must represent the bird of return that sings, not croaks, for us.
4. The problems and incidents must not strike at [our] roots, because they are sparks that could turn into fires with grave consequences. I believe that we can dispense totally with all such sedition.
5. Those with the power of decision among our people must take their place and must shut the doors in the face of such sedition and extinguish its fires.

Mahmud Ziyadah, Member of the Federation of Unions General Secretariat

The various political tendencies operating in the Palestinian arena and ordinary Palestinians generally do not disagree that the current phase has a serious impact on the future of our people's national cause. Moreover, these tendencies do not disagree on the importance and need to unite the ranks of all the Palestinian people's factions and groupings, to mobilize their enormous capacities, and to employ them better than ever before to confront the fateful current phase. This agreement emanates from the fact that all people realize that they are in the same boat, and that the freedom of any passenger on this boat must end where the freedom of other passengers begins. I believe that this is the particular point of agreement. Every citizen and every official in his position shoulders a major responsibility toward our ship's survival and toward fighting every endeavor to sink it. It is precisely in this manner that one can understand the dimensions and indicators of our national unity in the current phase.

I believe that a major part of the problems emanates from the continued presence of the main problem, the ongoing occupation. Dealing with problems must emanate from constant awareness of the main reason for the rise of these problems. In tangible terms, this awareness means that we show compassion for each other and firmly implement the agreements and protocols that govern our relations. At the same time, we must move promptly to draft laws and regulations to organize the various affairs of our economic and social life and to develop the infrastructure of the various specialized agencies, councils, and institutions—be they formed or elected—on the basis of capability and of an honesty that is clear of all factionalism and of political, tribal, and religious fanaticism. We are in the direst need of laws that take into account our real situation and our circumstances. We consider anybody who strays from such laws, regardless of who he is, accountable and punishable by whatever the laws stipulate.

Until this is accomplished, I find it necessary for all political tendencies, tribal councils and institutions, and all concerned groups to launch a general public initiative to remove their protection from any member who commits violations conflicting with their objectives and tendencies, and to even task such a member and punish him in accordance with the violation that he commits. I will particularly note violations that pose a threat to society's unity and unity of its national forces.

Perhaps this issue is one of the most important motives that should urge us to build and consolidate our internal front in this difficult and delicate phase.

Yusuf Abu-Laban, al-Duhayshah Camp

If one has to talk about national unity under the current circumstances, then the most important thing at which one could pause is the nature of the phase, and the fundamental requirements needed to traverse it peacefully with the social concept, maturely with the political

concept, and safely with the national concept. To secure all the elements of national protection for the individual and for society, we must thoroughly consider the reality of our present time and place. As Palestinian people, we emphasize that we live with our national constants, with the PLO—our struggle base—and also with our factions as struggle bases.

Suddenly, and in the face of the earthquake, or of the so-called collapse of the old world and the rise of the new world, we began to enter the serious turning point and we were forcefully dragged to this awkward phase. In order not to get profoundly lost, we, as Palestinians, must reaffirm our fear of total collapse, with all its aspects and its significance. The PLO is, within the minimum limit of full representation, our sole representative in the current phase, despite all the serious internal and external attempts to topple it with alternatives that cause us concern as citizens, and that divide our emotions between the existing reality and the alternative.

National unity can be a solid fact—free of fragmentation, gradual collapse, and the voluntary ceding of constants only in the presence of three fundamental elements:

- The citizen's dignity under sole legitimate representation;
- Unity of the ranks, which is perpetuated and rejuvenated through a profound understanding and a democratic approach in our factional situation;
- Preservation of the distinct Palestinian feelings in this current phase through field action at all levels.

As for fragmentation, disintegration, polarization, and circumvention of the PLO in various ways, they are all tantamount to endeavors aimed at complete development of alternatives. These alternatives will create numerous negatives, the most significant of which is internecine fighting.

The conflicts that occurred recently in various places among the political tendencies, with their different dimensions and public ideas, are nothing but a phenomenon reflecting the internal tremor, whose form and shape we have created voluntarily. So that we will not become the new Kurds or American Indians or the Jews of the 21st century, we must realize that the sole legitimate alternative in all past and future phases is us: the Palestinian people with their unity, their singularity, history, culture, children, old men, and with their democracy, which we aspire to see in the field.

Nizam al-Qawasimi, Hebron Muslim Youth Association Secretary and Member of the Chamber of Commerce, Industry, and Agriculture Executive Board

The indicators show a serious flaw in national unity in the current phase, because some Palestinian tendencies try to surpass the Palestinian constants on which the Palestinian people have unanimously agreed throughout their march of struggle over several decades.

How should we deal with the problems that crop up from time to time? The only solution to these problems is to have everybody return to the constants on which the Palestinians have agreed unanimously, because these constants emanate from the Palestinian people's just and legitimate right. Nothing new has developed that we should change our position from time to time and expose our national unity to danger.

'Arafat's Financial Practices, PLO Budget

*92AE0240A Paris AL-DUWALIYAH in Arabic
17 Feb 92 pp 14-17*

[Article: "'Arafat's Marriage to Suha al-Tawil Again Raises Question: Who Controls Keys to Palestinian Revolution's Funds?; first paragraph is AL-DUWALIYAH introduction to report]

[Text] The marriage of Abu-'Ammar [Yasir 'Arafat] is filling the Arab and international scene with question marks about this man who, with one hand leads the revolution, and with the other manages its wealth—the greatest wealth of any liberation movement in the world.

Amman—In the absence of any official Palestinian denial of last week's reports about PLO chairman Yasir 'Arafat's marriage to Miss Suha al-Tawil, and with everyone waiting for the marriage to be announced by the principal player himself, Abu-'Ammar, there were conflicting opinions and reports about the marriage. Sources close to the PLO in Tunis, Cairo, Paris, and Amman affirmed that the marriage had taken place several months ago, but had remained concealed in deference to the wishes of the Palestinian leader.

As soon as the news of 'Arafat's marriage spread, there was much talk about the man's responsibilities. Do these responsibilities leave him—a man targeted at every moment and every step, who never sleeps twice in one bed—room for a normal family life?

Palestinian circles went so far as to wonder about financial responsibilities, in particular. For many years the leader has controlled these responsibilities. Will 'Arafat proceed to redistribute powers within the PLO pyramid, so that the organization's funds do not become subject to surprises or legal inheritance problems?

The dangers besetting the life of a man like 'Arafat are a legitimate subject of discussion at any time, regardless of whether the man marries or remains without a wife and children. However, this time the discussion has left the realm of speculation to enter the area of a legitimate public question, particularly since it does not concern the life of an individual leader, but of an entire revolution.

No one disputes that 'Arafat has pledged himself and his wealth to the Palestinian revolution and has managed its wealth with wisdom and skill. The anxiety concerns the period after 'Arafat. The funds of revolutions and liberation movements are not insulated from whims. The most notorious example of this is what happened to the

funds of Algeria's FLN. They were entrusted to a single person, who deposited them in a Swiss bank. The FLN entered a tortuous labyrinth to regain the money, which was not the entitlement of any particular individual, but the property of the Algerian people.

Those who know Abu-'Ammar well assert that he must long ago have taken precautions about the PLO's money. However, these measures are not public; indeed, they are among the top secrets of the revolution. What has been announced is the agency that manages these funds—the Palestinian National Fund [PNF], which serves as the finance ministry of the Palestinian state.

The PNF is headed by Mr. Juwayd al-Ghusayn, a Palestinian businessman experienced in economic affairs and a member of the PLO Executive Committee.

Currently based in Amman, the Jordanian capital, the PNF has the job of allocating budgets to, and scrutinizing the accounts of, Palestinian financial organizations such as the Organization of Families of Martyrs, the Palestine Liberation Army, embassies and representations, paying the salaries of PLO members, as well as financial support for the steadfastness of the inhabitants of the occupied territories.

The PNF budget is estimated at about \$200 million, drawn from many sources. The most prominent of them is the financial support given by the Arab states, especially the wealthy ones (\$150 million a year). There is also aid given by friendly foreign countries and charitable organizations, as well as the 5 percent deducted from the salaries of Palestinians working in the Arab states.

Because of the crisis of the Kuwait occupation and the position the PLO took during it, aid from the Gulf countries to the PLO decreased greatly. Although some of these countries, such as Saudi Arabia, have recently given money to support the intifadah, the Gulf war led to the Kuwaiti Government's halting support to Palestinian universities, estimated at \$18 million a year, in addition to the \$6 million it was sending to support the intifadah. Furthermore, remittances from the Palestinian community living in Kuwait, one of the wealthiest overseas communities, were cut off. Iraq's payments to the PLO also stopped, particularly in the wake of the international economic boycott of Iraq. Libya, however, pledged to pay the PLO \$3 million a month starting from the beginning of 1990, to be paid directly to Palestinian organizations in the occupied territories.

Because of this decrease in the amount of Arab aid, the PLO turned to a series of austerity measures, including:

- Stopping medical treatment, except for employees, their families, and those wounded in the intifadah, along with setting definite criteria for treating people from the occupied territories for whom treatment is not available there;

- Stopping overseas medical treatment;
- Establishing guest houses in Tunis instead of hotels; (Board for some second- and third-rank leaders was costing 30,000 Jordanian dinars a month per person;)
- Freezing employee transfers to save the cost of moving them with their families;
- Halting new hiring in all departments, agencies, and offices;
- Minimizing the number of members in PLO delegations to international conferences and, if possible, limiting representation at conferences to the office director;
- Prohibiting first-class travel, except by members of the Executive Committee, and prohibiting employee travel on official business except in extreme necessity;
- Reducing fuel and maintenance payments for official vehicles within definite guidelines.

The PLO has also closed a number of its embassies and overseas offices—for example: Gambia, Madagascar, Maldives, Mongolia, Karachi, Bolivia, and Dublin.

In the financial report that the PNF chairman presented to the 20th PNC session held in Algiers last September, there was reference to funds sent directly to Palestinian organizations in the occupied territories on the basis of prior coordination with the PLO. These funds include aid coming from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East [UNRWA] (\$93 million); from the European Common Market (\$105 million); and from industrialized countries such as Britain, Spain, France, Italy, Holland, Germany, Canada, and Sweden (\$85 million) last year.

The report also showed a decrease in the PLO's yearly budget from \$190 million to \$120 million, with payment of \$200 million to support the intifadah.

Even with the effects of the Gulf war, it is still correct to say that the Palestinian revolution is the richest revolutionary movement in the world. PLO revenues before the Gulf war amounted to \$500 million. Half of this came from contributions by wealthy Palestinians throughout the world; half came from Arab aid and investment.

Investments come in the forefront of principal revenues in the PLO budget. These investments are not only in the Arab states, but also in countries of the Third World and former Eastern bloc, as well as in some countries of Western Europe, the Americas, and Africa.

From the beginning, Yasir 'Arafat and his economic advisers paid special attention to Black Africa and certain Latin American countries, and to the possible establishment of economic cooperation between the PLO and these countries, because the Palestinian cause enjoyed complete support from all the African countries and from liberation movements there, due to a common ideological ground focusing on combatting racial discrimination and fighting foreign occupation.

After the 1973 war, most countries of the African continent severed relations with Israel because of its refusal to withdraw from the Arab lands it had occupied. The PLO was able to take advantage of the favorable political situation and expanded on the African continent by providing it with Palestinian agricultural engineers and specialists in an attempt to head off Israel, which was trying to return to the African continent by sending agricultural, military, and technical missions.

The PLO's economic strategy gradually began to shift from offering agricultural and industrial advice to real investment in most of the countries of Black Africa. The PLO also encouraged the Arab countries to change their strategy from providing financial aid and loans (most of which were going into the accounts of high officials) to establishing active cooperation and joint economic projects that would benefit the poor peoples of the continent.

For example, the PLO established highly successful model farms in Uganda and Somalia. Other African countries were led to ask for the help of Palestinian experts spread throughout the world. For example, in 1985, the Government of Mozambique asked the local PLO representative to supply it with a number of specialists. The PLO immediately carried out the request.

'Arafat would never visit an African country unless he was accompanied by economic advisers to sign economic cooperation agreements between the PLO and the country he was visiting. In Guinea-Bissau, the Palestinians established a model farm named "Solidarity Farm" in cooperation with local residents. The PLO also established a poultry farm and one for pineapples. In Tanzania, the PLO contributed to managing shops at Dar es Salaam Airport. The first shop was opened in the presence of the head of the Tanzanian Government and a PLO representative. This successful experiment spread to other African countries, with the PLO opening shops in the airports of Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Zanzibar. The PLO also sends specialized Palestinian doctors at the request of governments, such as Somalia and Ghana, and sends teachers to other African countries.

The Samid [Steadfast] Organization (considered one of the mainstays of the PNF, it was established basically to improve work opportunities for Palestinian refugees in the camps in Lebanon) has been able to establish dozens of factories and workshops in Africa. It has opened a number of branches in Mali, Tanzania, Guinea, Somalia, and Congo.

Relations between the PLO and the African countries are not limited to political and economic areas; they extend to cooperation in the military field. The PLO has signed a number of agreements to establish training camps and sell light weapons produced by the Palestinian Weapons Development Scientific Committee.

In Latin America, PLO investments are increasing by the day, especially since there is an Arab emigrant community throughout the region. Aided by wealthy Palestinians, Lebanese, and Syrians, the PLO has been able to establish tourist projects in Brazil and Argentina. When the Samoza regime fell in Nicaragua and revolutionaries took power under the leadership of Daniel Ortega, the PLO concluded a number of economic and military agreements with them.

Throughout, Israel frequently expressed its displeasure at PLO competition in countries it considered under its economic and military influence, inasmuch as the Palestinians were offering services like those that Israel was giving, in order to enter Third World countries by the back door. Economic and military cooperation would mean control over the domestic lifeline of those countries and a hold on the strings of their foreign policy.

Investments also exist in some of the countries of Western Europe and America, all of them focused on speculating in financial markets and buying stocks. Other investments are in Pakistan, Japan, and China.

Within the Arab countries, the Fatah organization has investments in the Gulf countries—mainly navigation companies and travel agencies. There are also investments in the agricultural field and in the area of textiles and clothing in Yemen.

In general, figures on Palestinian investments and Palestinian funds are considered fundamental secrets of the PLO. They are said to range between \$2 billion and \$5 billion.

Management of these investments is supervised by Mr. Ahmad Quray' (Abu-'Ala'), Economic Department director and Central Committee member of Fatah, and by Mr. Fu'ad al-[Shubaki], the PLO's financial officer.

Palestinian investment generally takes place in the name of a number of Palestinian businessmen living in the Middle East and Western countries. The Arab Bank Limited, based in Amman, also manages some of the PLO's funds.

Regarding responsibility for Palestinian financial decisionmaking, Palestinian leader Yasir 'Arafat has two positions. First, he is the chairman of the PLO; and second, he is the general commander of Fatah, the largest of the movements comprising the PLO. The Palestinian leader thus controls the keys of two budgets, not one.

Of course, top Palestinian leaders have their own private budgets, but large sums are disbursed only with written approval from Abu-'Ammar. He is the ultimate authority when it comes to the ways in which Palestinian funds are spent. As one Palestinian cadre has said, the subject of money may be "the most powerful weapon in 'Arafat's hand."

[Boxed item 1, p 16]

Budget of a State

It was commonly said during the seventies that the PLO budget exceeded that of some small Arab countries, such as Lebanon. Economic observers link the collapse of the exchange rate of the Lebanese pound to the departure of Palestinian fighters from Lebanon after the 1982 Israeli invasion and the transfer of PLO offices to Tunis. Specifically, the PLO withdrew its funds from Lebanese banks, and the special budget that the PLO had used to fund politicians, political parties, and information media was halted. These things had constituted an important current in the Lebanese economy. This is not to deny that the PLO still has many investments on the Lebanese scene. These investments may have resumed activity with the stabilization of the security situation, and now that political opportunities have become available.]

[Boxed item 2, p 16]

PLO Budgets for Recent Years

Fiscal Period	Budget (in dollars)	Expenditures (in dollars)
1 Feb '84-30 Jun '85	\$123,468,764	\$768,915
1 Jul '85-30 Jun '86	\$190,000,000	\$179,702,058
1 Jul '86-30 Jun '87	\$198,937,434	\$196,622,728
1 Jul '87-30 Jun '88	\$199,000,000	\$213,533,555
1 Jul '88-30 Jun '89	\$199,000,000	\$277,577,113
1 Jul '89-30 Jun '90	\$199,000,000	\$307,724,689
1 Jul '90-30 Jun '91	\$199,000,000	Not yet recorded
30 Jul '90-30 Jun '92*	Estimated \$120 million	—

* [dates as published]

[Boxed item 3, p 16]

The Case of Georgina

A large part of the PLO's budget goes to care for the families of martyrs. Each family receives income appropriate to the martyr's status and the country in which the family lives. A Palestinian source told AL-DUWALIYAH that families in Lebanon now receive \$15 a month, while other families receive thousands of dollars. As an example, the source cited that former world beauty queen Mrs. Georgina Rizq, widow of the Palestinian leader Abu-al-Hasan Salamah, who was assassinated in a car bomb explosion in Beirut in the late seventies, was receiving monthly pay of 16,000 Lebanese pounds (worth approximately \$5,000 at the time) with her son.

PLO Praises Green Line Penetration Operation

92P40137A

[Editorial Report] The official organ of the Fatah faction of the PLO, Nicosia FILASTIN AL-THAWRAH in Arabic, carries an article by Iyad 'Abd-al-Khalil on pages 11-12 in its 23 February 1992 issue in which it

praises the Black Panther operation against the recruits at Gal'ed training camp south of Haifa.

According to the publication, the members of the Black Panther team "deserve the highest commendation in appreciation of their meritorious service" as they carried out "one of the most courageous and difficult commando operations in recent years." The magazine explains that this operation was conducted given "logistical deficiencies," but that the group members "distinguished themselves" and "showed a high level of training." Operationally, the commando team "penetrated the Green Line, going deep beyond it" and they were able to use "first order weapons such as knives, sickles, and homemade weapons" while "wresting the soldiers' weapons from them."

FILASTIN AL-THAWRAH then parallels this attack with "the night of the hang gliders" in 1987 when another army camp was attacked by a Palestinian commando and six Israeli soldiers were killed.

The publication then examines the impact of the attack, saying that it "dealt a deep psychological blow to the Israeli military and security apparatus" which "ordered a sweep of the Qiryat 'Anin region, west of Janin, and near Umm-al-Fahm, inside occupied Palestine."

FILASTIN AL-THAWRAH then looks at the implications of this attack. It says "large groups of Palestinian youths who have 'secretly' been sentenced to death in absentia are ready to endure the risks in a war of nerves." They are waging an unrelenting war against Israeli forces on the roads and within Palestinian villages and cities." The magazine continues by focusing on "the strong sympathy and embrace which the Palestinian citizenry is offering the Palestinian groups which have taken this war of nerves on their shoulders."

The PLO publication then extols "the high capability of the commandos of the intifadah to invent new means of fighting that correspond with the demographic and geographic nature of the area." The magazine concludes by explaining that this commando operation "brings to light a new reality in the occupied territories, and this is still being formed." This "reality" is being expressed by "more live fire" and "more intifadah," and will find "its decisive form in light of the developments in the peace process."

Bassam Abu-Sharif, Ibrahim al-Sus Tensions

92AE0240B Paris AL-DUWALIYAH in Arabic
17 Feb 92 p 29

[Article by J.D.: "'Arafat's Phone Call Complicates Matters, Abu-Sharif Took Revenge on al-Sus, Habash the Victim!']

[Text] PLO sources say that 'Arafat will not forgive his political adviser Bassam Abu-Sharif for leaking to French television the news that Habash was being

treated in Paris, particularly because the entire affair was a matter of personal revenge on Ibrahim al-Sus, the PLO's Paris representative.

France has closed the "Habash file," but have the repercussions of the affair on the Palestinian level ended? Some believe that whatever France's level of responsibility may have been, there was an agreement between the French and Palestinian officials that the affair of Habash's trip to Paris for treatment would remain secret.

The Palestinian side was unable to abide by the agreement. Accusatory fingers are being pointed at the entourage of PLO Chairman Yasir 'Arafat. This is not the first time that the Palestinian leader's circles are being accused of leaking information without his knowledge. Usually in such cases, the accused would be dismissed for a time, only to return to his job after a "reconciliation" and intervention by friendly figures.

The affair this time will doubtlessly have repercussions and assume such dimensions that friends will be unable to intervene to close the gap, for the attack on the PLO is continuing. The American CNN channel obtained from Western intelligence circles—probably from Israeli intelligence—a recording of a telephone conversation between the PLO chairman and his Paris representative. In it 'Arafat accused "the Jews" and described them as "malicious" and "dirty." He blamed "arrogant France," with what he called its "dirty culture."

The telephone recording began to have repercussions. The French media started accusing the PLO chairman of "Islamism." Ibrahim al-Sus, director of the PLO's office in France, brought action against the American television [channel] after hearing the recording. He said that it was incomprehensible, "an operation contrived against the PLO."

This time, Abu-'Ammar [Yasir 'Arafat] would not pardon the Palestinian official who leaked the news of Habash's being brought to Paris. It was no longer possible to hide the name of the official, since most Palestinian circles were talking openly about him and pointing at Bassam Abu-Sharif, accusing him of "putting his personal interest ahead of the national interest."

Why are Palestinian circles accusing Yasir 'Arafat's adviser Bassam Abu-Sharif?

Palestinian circles are saying that relations between Abu-Sharif and Ibrahim al-Sus reached an unprecedentedly low level. The reason is that the PLO's Paris representative was able to put a veto on Abu-Sharif's coming to France. He once left him detained for 13 hours at the airport and did not intervene with French authorities to grant him an entry visa.

The same circles interpret al-Sus's bad treatment of Abu-'Ammar's adviser as a sign that Abu-Sharif is politically isolated within the Palestinian leadership and that his relations with the Palestinian chairman are very bad.

Abu-Sharif, therefore, has been trying for some time to break the collar around his neck by forging direct ties of political and personal relations with France and certain French officials, and bypassing the PLO's Paris office, through which all communications pass and which arranges all meetings in the presence of al-Sus.

Furthermore, Abu-Sharif contacted the French journalist Anne [Saint Clair], who is responsible for an important television political program, on which she interviews a well-known figure to comment on recent political, social, international, and domestic events. Abu-Sharif asked her whether he might replace al-Sus, who was to be the program's guest. He pressed her and finally suggested that he might participate with al-Sus in the program. Al-Sus, however, refused, as did Anne Saint Clair.

The gates of France were all closed to Abu-Sharif. The French Foreign Ministry even informed him that it considered the PLO office to be the sole channel between France and the PLO.

French circles say that Abu-Sharif decided to take revenge. The Habash affair came as an opportunity for revenge, first on the French Government, then on al-Sus. Abu-Sharif leaked the news to the press. He contacted a friend of his named Gerard Sabbagh, an editor at Channel Two of French government television. Sabbagh thought he had scored a journalistic scoop and contacted all his friends at the station. Together, they set up the operation of videotaping Habash's arrival at Le Bourget Airport north of Paris. That was the tape that led to the scandal.

Tulkarm Chamber of Commerce Protests Taxation

92AE0247A Jerusalem *AL-NAHAR* in Arabic
26 Jan 92 p 3

[Text] The president of the Chamber of Commerce, Industry, and Agriculture here has submitted a memorandum of protest to the head of the Civil Administration in the West Bank regarding the tax policy. Selections from the memorandum follow:

With the decline of economic conditions in the West Bank in general, and in Tulkarm specifically; and avoiding the increasing severity and complexity of the matter; and in order to work towards stabilizing the commercial, industrial, and agricultural situation in the region; the Chamber of Commerce, Industry, and Agriculture in the city of Tulkarm sees, from the point of view of its own responsibility, that the severity of taxation has increased greatly, to the point where [the taxes'] different names and specifications have become the greatest worry costing citizens sleep; especially the income and [value-added taxes].

Authorities' Taxation Measures

In order to implement the income tax policy, the following rules were laid down:

A. Assessments

Current assessments have remained random, centered on conjecture and approximation, and on the skill of the assessment employees. [Assessments] depend upon surprise visits to the workplace, the picture the taxpayer presents of his living expenses, and the [value-]added tax estimates.

As a result of the taxpayer's resignation to the facts, [we request] avoiding another increase in assessments, so that the taxpayer will not sustain higher expenses and fines, or other hardships.

B. Exemptions

The authorities have not been any more successful in its dealing with exemptions. Tax authorities set a fixed base for exemptions, beginning in 1992. The strange thing is that they were set as the result of more than 20 years of complaints. But from a practical standpoint, they are now new. Originally, enough income to cover the necessities of life was left to the individual, and after that it was seen what income was left.

The government exempted the first 600 shekels of monthly income from taxation. To show the decline of this exemption, it is enough to point to the following:

First, a simple study published on the 16th and 18th of December 1991, showing that the monthly cost of a basket of consumer goods in Israel for a average family of 4-6 members is 4,200 shekels, and that the essential average for the monthly purchases of an average Palestinian family of 4-6 members is 2,117 shekels.

In a recent publication distributed by the National Insurance Organization in Israel, individual income of 1,645 shekels was judged to be the poverty line in Israel.

Now let us look at the buying power of those 600 shekels.

An average family of 4-6 members needs at least two kilograms of bread daily, at a cost of four shekels, and one kilogram of meat per day, costing 20 shekels. At the end of the month, this poor taxpayer has paid out 720 shekels for these two things, without taking into account:

- The price of vegetables, eggs, cheese, various types of oils, rice, sugar, milk, fruit, and various types of breakfast, dinner, and lunch foods;
- The average family's clothing needs for various seasons of the year;
- The children's school, college, and other needs;
- Allowances for transport, the water and electric bills, and rent;
- Most importantly, dealing with sickness through treatment and nursing.

C. The Tax Scale

After our look at exemption, it suffices to say that they are not tax brackets, as they should be, but they are close, and they increase the pace of escalation to the point

where they bind the taxpayer to the piece of bread of which he is so greatly in need.

D. System of Advance Payments

It is self-evident that income tax should be imposed only upon income exceeding the limit of exemptions and deductions in one year. This net income is achieved only at the end of the set tax year. The inadmissibility of imposing income tax upon a hypothetical, as yet unearned, income is also self-evident. Justice requires the keeping of capital to secure the continuity of work and to make profit, which is what makes the system of advance payments illegitimate. [memorandum apparently excerpted here]

Y. Measures After the Assessment

We would not be exaggerating if we said that the tax authority, after the assessment measures, whose injustice has been noted, is expert in its method of:

- Levying fines for any delay relating to the cost of living index;
- Linking the shekel (the commercial currency) to the dinar (the investor's capital) on the basis of the average exchange rate during the income year, not at the due date; This alone often causes capital erosion.
- Tax officials' cheating of establishments, places of business, and stores;
- Confiscating and holding of assets;
- Confiscating seals and ledgers on the pretext of investigation.

Z. Suppression and Opposition Method

The authorities have adopted its method as a result of the oppression and injustice the taxpayer feels; it does not make him feel secure. Inevitably, after seeing his opposition being hindered by the administrative officials, the taxpayer must bring his problem to the civil judiciary, as an escape from any administrative tyranny, though this judicial level is incapable on two levels—primarily and by appeal. In our view, this method is sufficiently capable of curbing defiance of any administrative oppression.

Value-Added Tax

The value-added tax, excise tax, or sales tax—call it what you will—added the burden of a new tax. As mentioned above, there are fundamentals and principles that must be observed in imposing taxes, such as the social and economic conditions of the citizens upon whom one wishes to impose the tax. In our view, we reaffirm the inadmissibility of imposing a tax such as this one upon West Bank merchants and producers in this way, and at the [same] level at which it was imposed on Israeli merchants and producers, over the market and its prices inside Israel and the occupied territories.

Poultry Farms and Taxation

The social and economic conditions of West Bank society mean that it is a limited-income consumer society. In order to provide the minimum consumer goods locally, Jordanian legislators have exempted all agricultural, livestock, and similar projects from the tax. We were surprised recently by the tax authority's inclusion of poultry-breeding farms' revenues among taxable income, contrary to the principle that the above legislators set. There is no reason [for it], except that poultry-breeding farms are not mentioned in the law. There is no objection to canceling the tax imposed, and going back to the moral law.

Exoneration

Exploiting [the promise of] tax forgiveness to force the taxpayer to pay the taxes imposed upon him: It is not granted until he has suffered intensely and paid what the tax official considers due, even if that is merely an imaginary tax obligation not yet due.

In light of this, the Chamber of Commerce, Industry, and Agriculture requests urgently that you work towards the following:

- Radically rethinking tax policy in general, taking into consideration the interests of citizens and their right to secure the minimum daily needs of life, in light of

the difficult circumstances we are now experiencing;

- We ask the authorities to carry their duty of protecting the individual and eroded capital.
- the immediate repeal of the advance system, or making it voluntary rather than compulsory;
- Rethinking the system of allowing exemptions and deductions in general; These are always open to change and amendment, as time goes by, taking into consideration the family ties and commitments of the Arab taxpayer, as well as the inflation rate and cost of living index.
- An immediate end to the system linking taxes to the Jordanian dinar, when business activity is conducted in the Israeli currency.
- Respect for the individual and an end to restrictive measures in assessing and levying taxes.
- Urgent rethinking of the subject of imposing the value-added tax in the occupied territories in general;
- An end to the system of [coercing the taxpayer with] tax forgiveness, in order to give the taxpayer freedom of movement to develop his resources without any complications or obstacles;
- An end to the taxation of the revenues of poultry-breeding farms and similar concerns;
- And an immediate end to the imposition of taxes on all means of public transportation.

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